RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 19th August, 1987/28 *Sravana,* 1909 (*Saka*)

The House met at eleven of the clock,

The Deputy Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*321. [*Transferred to the 28th August,* 1987.]

Lalabazar-Bhairabi Railway line under N.F. Railway

*322. DR. C. SILVERA:†

SHRI M. KADHARSHA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the work on Lalabazar-Bhairabi rail line (North-east Frontier Railway) is going very slow;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that an estimated expenditure of Rs. 1,46,064 thousand is still required to be made to complete the work;

(d) what steps Government propose to take to allocate the required amount, keeping in view that it would be the only railway line in Mizoram; and

(e) by when this line is likely to be commissioned?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) and (b) The work had earlier been progressing slowly due to delay in getting possession of the requisite lands and for a short period due to reduced availability of resources.

(c) to (e) Approximately Rs. 12 crores are required beyond 1987-88, to complete the project. The first phase of the New Line from Lalabazar to Jamira, is programmed to be commissioned in 1988. The remaining portion upto Bhairabi is likely to be commissioned by March, 90, subject to availability of funds.

DR. C. SILVERA: Madam Deputy Chairman, Mizoram is situated in one of the farthest corners of India and it is poorly linked to the rest of India. The only life line that we have is a road between Silchar and Aizwal, which is always blocked during the rainy season. There is no railway line and the Vayudoot service we have is below the expectation. The railway line from Lalabazar to Bhairabi is very essential for the upliftment of Mizoram and to have a good communication between Mizoram and the rest of India. In the answer, the Minister has stated that it will require about Rs. 12 crores more after 1987-88 to complete the work. But the perusal of a detailed programme of work, machinery and rolling stock of Railways for 1986-87 says differently. The document issued by the Railways states that it will require Rs. 13.19 crores more to complete the work. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether, while calculating the figure, due weightage has been given to escalation and if so, what the likely escalation is. The Ministry has provided only Rs. 3 crores during 1986-87 and Rs. 11 crores in 1985-86 for this line. What is the allocation made during the current year, that is, 1987-88?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: As far as the question of escalation is concerned, it is very difficult to evaluate what the escalation would be because it is so much dependent on things like cost of labour, steel price and various other factors which are outside the control of the Ministry of Railways. However, as I assured the hon. Member, we propose to complete not only this line but we are trying to complete five lines in the north-eastern region of the NF Railway by 1990. One of the lines is unfortunately held up

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. C. Silvera.

due to a dispute between two State Governments. If the land is given to us in time, we can even complete that line.

As far as the allocation is concerned, I think the hon. Member is wrongly informed. In 1985-86 an amount of Rs. 2.8 crores was allocated. I heard him say Rs. 11 crores. It was Rs. 2.8 crores. In 1986-87 it was Rs. 4.6 crores and in 1987-88 we have allotted Rs. 3 crores. But very recently I have added another crore of rupees to that. So the total allocation in 1987-88 will be Rs. 4 crores and we propose to complete the first phase of this line by February-March, 1988, and the complete line by 1990.

DR. C. SILVERA: Madam Deputy Chairman, I have quoted this figure from a book. I may be wrong because of this book.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, in the year 1985-86 Rs. 2.8 crores was allotted and upto 1985-86 Rs. 11.88 crores approximately has been given to N.F. Railway for this project.

DR. C. SILVERA: Madam, what is the criteria for giving priority for allotment of funds? May I know from the Minister on what basis the allocation of funds will be made by his Ministry for the construction of new railway lines? Madam, I would request the Minister to give top priority to this sector because Mizoram is very badly connected with the rest of India and if this work is completed things will improve in that region.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, priority is given to project linked lines and to heavy density routes and also sometimes to far-flung and backward regions of the country. According to the directions given by the hon. Prime Minister the North-Eastern region does have a place of importance in our programme and that is why in this particular year the allocation for new railway lines was increased. If my memory serves me right, I am subject to correction, we have given as much as 35 to 40 per cent of increased allocation this year to new lines in N.E. Region. Madam, priority has been given to this project and we are proposing to complete it by 1990. Unless some unforeseen circumstances arise, we have programmed to complete it by 1990. I would also like to clarify that though this project was sanctioned quite a few years ago, I think it was in 1978-79, we had not been given the land quite till recently. Upto March, 1982, only 3 per cent of land required by us was handed over, upto March, 1983 only 20 per cent of the land was handed over, upto March 1984, 85 per cent of the land was handed over and it was only in March 1985, full land requirement was given to the Ministry of Railways. Therefore, it has been only two years since work has been progressing on this particular line. I do not think that the hon. Member should feel in any way neglected, because we are hopeful of completing this project within five years from the beginning of work, that is, 1985.

SHRI M. KADHARSHA: Madam Chairman, the whole of the North-East is totally neglected by the Government. Even after celebrating the 40th year of independence, we are shocked to understand that there are many States which do not have even a single kilometre of railway line. May I know from the Minister, which are the other States apart from Mizoram that do not have even a single kilometre of railway line? The hon. Minister has just now stated that subject to availability of funds, the project will be completed in 1990. I do not understand the logic behind the Government's policies. Why some parts in the country should be neglected and some parts like Gwalior should be nurtured? Only Gwalior does not have any shortage of funds. Then, why Mizoram should have such paucity of funds?

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Madam, this is not fair.

AN HON. MEMBER: He is from Gwalior.

SHRI ARUN SINGH: Madam, it is extremely chivalrous of Vajpayeeji to have said that.

SHRI M. KADHARSHA: Madam, may I know from the hon. Minister whether any categorical assurance will be given that this work will be completed?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, I am repeatedly saying that certain railway lines in the North-Eastern region are being given priority in our scheme of things and we are proposing to complete these lines by the financial year ending 1990. Unless some totally unforeseen circumstances arise, which are unlikely, I propose to complete this line by 1990 and I am serious when I say this.

SHRI DHARANIDHAR BASUMATARI: Madam, whatever reply the Railway Minister has given just now is acceptable. But he should also understand that this is a sensitive area of India which is not accessible. The other day I happened to meet the people of that region when I visited there and all of them were crying for the rail connection. In the matter of air connection also, only a Dornier is being allowed to fly from Calcutta to Mizoram. So, the normal standard or criterion that you adopt is, I think, not enough because if you want to win over the people who have all the time been for secession and with all the procedures that you have now you cannot do it, and you cannot win over the people of Mizoram. I would like to know from the honourable Minister whether a greater priority will be given and whether it will be seen sincerely—I do not have words and I do not know what to say—that there is a special provision for the development of the hill areas because, otherwise, they will try again for secession.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, this line is itself the proof of the seriousness of our mood in completing the lines in the North-Eastern Region. This work was started after 100 per cent land was handed over to us in 1985. It is only two years now and it is supposed to be completed in three years and it would be a total of five years. With as many as 14 major bridges and as many as 123 minor bridges that are involved, it is not a very easy terrain for railway lines to be constructed and, therefore, five years, I think, is a fair time and I do not think that the honourable member would grudge us and within the priorities we have given this line in the North-Eastern Region on the direction of the Prime Minister will receive more priority amongst the other priorities.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Upendra.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Madam, it is nearly a decade since the then Prime Minister announced these lines. I have myself seen the progress on some of these lines and it is very slow and the Minister always says that he is giving the highest priority. I would like to know from the honourable Minister in concrete terms what the total estimated cost today is, how much they have already spent on these lines, how much more is to be spent and how much they are going to allot next year.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, as far as the other railway lines are concerned, I have the details and if you give me a few minutes, I will add them up. But I think I can convey the information to the honourable Member later. As far as this line is concerned, we have already spent approximately, out of an estimated total of Rs. 32 crores, if you take this year's allocation also, a little over Rs. 20 crores. We would have spent a little over Rs. 20 crores.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Kamalendu Bhattacharjee.

SHRI KAMALENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Madam, you will agree with me that construction of a railway line is a continuous process and cannot be viewed in isolation. The Lalabazar-Bhairabi line is entirely in the hill section and also on the Katakhal-Lalabazar section, the condition of running of the trains is so bad that in one minute I will tell you a story to explain it. A gentleman was passing

along the railway track here and another man from inside a passing train asked him, "Why don't you come in and travel by the train?". To this, the other gentleman replied, "I am in a hurry and so, I cannot go by train'.! This is the condition of running of trains on this section. There is another section from Lumding right up to Badarpur and this is also very bad and during the rainy season it is disrupted. What is the priority for having an alternative railway line from Lumding to Badarpur? I would like to know from the honourable Minister what he is going to do about this line from Katakhal to Lalabazar and about the alternative BG line from Lanka to Badarpur.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, I require notice for this.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Nirmal Chatterjee.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Madam, I assume 'unlikely unforeseen' things. But the Minister contradicts himself in the reply and let me point that out. On the one hand, Madam, he says that the difficulties of terrain do not permit him to complete the line in a shorter time and, on the other, he says that the completion will depend on availability of funds. Now, which is really valid?

Then, Madam, there are many criticisms that the Railways really have no priority ordering and there is no self of priority schemes from where new schemes or anything like that can be taken out, according to availability of funds, can be picked up and can be completed. The only indication of priority ordering the Government is tremendously *ad hoc* depending on the mood of wisdom or unwisdom of the Prime Minister. I do not think this is objective enough. Do the railways intend to have some scheme of priorities so that we do not have to debate it in this subjective manner? And part (c) why do you want to spread very thinly funds over many projects? Once again, is it because of adhocism, various vested interests or various Ministerial interests that you want to do it?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please ask your question.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: I can always end up by asking, am I right, and that will be my question.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: As you know, there is a time-limit of two minutes for asking a question and you cannot go on asking like, am I right or not?

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: So instead of thin spreading of your resources, if you want to give North-Eastern region the priority, cannot you do this that you concentrate your resources so that the time spent is not five years, but three years? Corresponding to that my question is what is the technological time necessary for construction of this line. I mean technological time, if everything else is available?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You did not ask whether you are right or wrong.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: That I have already asked you.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Madam, I am lost in the plethora of questions that he has asked. Anyway, let me see. The first part of the question was something about availability of funds. Madam, funds are being allocated to this line for its targeted completion in 1990.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Why?

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Let me finish. I am already confused with so many questions. If you interrupt me, I will be lost completely. Let me come back again to what I was talking about.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Such a young person should not ordinarily be confused.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: It is because you put me a number of questions. He said that in part (a) I have talked about reduced resources. For a very short period there was an overlap. But when we got the full land after that we had to allocate. But in the beginning of the financial year when full land was

not available the allocation was not available in the Budget. So, there was a slight overlap for a few months. But now we are allocating so that we complete this line in 1990. Now, the next question I think the hon. Member asked was about priorities, Madam we do have priorities in our scheme of things, as I said for heavy density areas, backward regions, project linked lines, and, therefore, a balanced and comprehensive approach has to be adopted, as opposed to an unbalanced and restricted one. I mean one has to see things in their totality. If I was to say that I am only going to give allocations to heavy density areas, what will happen to North-Eastern region, what will happen to Vizag project, what will happen to project linked lines? On the other hand, if I said that only project linked lines would get the money how will I be able to carry more traffic in heavy density areas like between Howrah and Delhi. Therefore, it has to be a balanced and comprehensive approach. And, finally the Hon. Member, if my memory serves me right, talked about thinly spreading resources. Madam, we have been allotted only approximately about Rs. 177 crores for new lines and we are trying to see that every region is catered for and every priority is catered for. However, I do not think that the hon. Member should have any grouse or any reason for complaint because as you know, Madam, as far as MTP, metropolitan transport is concerned, as much as 90 per cent of the total allocation for the entire country is being spent on Calcutta.

कुमारी सईदा खातूना : माननीय उपसभापति जी, मैं आदरणीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहूंगी कि मध्यप्रदेश और महाराष्ट्र को जोड़ने के लिए जो गोंदिया-जबलपुर लाइन है ब्राडगेज, इसके लिए कोई सर्वे के आदेश दिए गए हैं ? यदि हां, तो क्या यह सातवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में सर्वे कम्पलीट होकर इसका काम चालू कर दिया जायेगा ? अगर इसमें ज्यादा खर्चा है तो पहले गोंदिया से बालाघाट को जोड़कर, जो 25 - 30 किलोमीटर का टुकड़ा है, आगे टुकड़ों-टुकड़ों में इस प्रोजेक्ट को कम्पलीट करेंगे क्या, क्योंकि इसमें जो ज्यादा खर्चा है वह कम हो जाएगा ? तो पहले गोंदिया से बालाघाट को जोड़कर, फिर बाद में बालाघाट से नैनपुर को जोड़कर फिर नैनपुर से जबलपुर को जोड़कर आप इस तरह तीन टर्म में इसको कम्पलीट कर सकेंगे और इससे खर्चा भी कम आएगा ।

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: By the farthest stretch of geographical imagination unfortunately Jabalpur-Gondia does not come on Lala Bazar-Bhairabi line.

*323. [*The questioner (Shri J. P. Goyal) was absent. For answer, vide col. 29 infra*].

Electrification of Railway lines under Palghat and Trivandrum Railway Divisions

*324. SHRI B. V. ABDULLA KOYA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have conducted any feasibility survey for the electrification of railway lines under the Palghat and Trivandrum Railway Divisions;

(b) whether Government propose to electrify the Mangalore-Shoranur line and the Palghat-Trivandrum line or any part thereof; and

(c) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) Feasibility surveys for Electrification of the following lines were carried out:

Palghat Division: Jolarpettai-Erode-Shoranur and Salem-Mettur Dam sections.

Trivandrum Division: Sharanur-Trivandrum Section.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI B. V. ABDULLA KOYA: Considering the heavy passenger traffic in Kerala, that is, in Palghat-Trivandrum Divisions, and also in view of the fact that trains in Kerala are very slow running and they take double the normal time taken by the